



Media Release

Firefighters honour fallen SA Fire Brigade hero with gravesite service

INTERNATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS' DAY: Thursday, 4 May 2023

More than a century after a blast injured a firefighter at a ferocious Adelaide factory fire, his ultimate sacrifice was remembered with a service at his refurbished gravesite.

The private Rededication Memorial Service occurred at West Terrace Cemetery on Thursday, 4 May 2023.

Dozens of serving Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) and SA Country Fire Service (CFS) firefighters honoured Firefighter Hedger with a guard of honour at the International Firefighters' Day service.

Firefighter Herbert Hedger background

On 5 January 1914, SA Fire Brigade Firefighter Herbert Hedger arrived at the burning Buttery and Sons Furniture Factory on Rundle Street at Kent Town, when the roof collapsed and a huge flame shot across the road, knocking him off his feet.

The heat from the blast is said to have been so intense it scorched the paint on the doors of homes opposite the burning furniture factory.

Firefighter Hedger received facial burns yet continued to work for several days, before dying in Adelaide Hospital 25 days after the factory fire on 30 January 1914. A coroner at the time scoffed at the idea that shock and smoke inhalation could have caused him to perish.

Firefighter Hedger's gravesite had fallen into disrepair and was recently refurbished thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Fire Service Fund, Adelaide Cemeteries Authority and MFS.

SA Fire Brigade Firefighter Herbert Hedger left behind a grieving widow Emily and three children. His descendants proudly attended his Rededication Memorial Service, 109 years on.

Quotes attributable to Emergency Services Minister, Joe Szakacs

International Firefighters' Day is an opportunity for us to pause and reflect on the service of all firefighters across the world, and the ultimate sacrifice that some firefighters have made while keeping the community safe.

International Firefighters Day this year is a particularly sombre occasion as we reflect on the tragic passing of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services firefighter Izabella Nash in the Slacks Creek fire on Tuesday morning.

Today, we honour all serving, retired and past MFS and CFS firefighters for their service, and thank them for their commitment to community safety. We also remember the selflessness of the South Australian firefighters who've died in the line of duty, including Firefighter Herbert Hedger 109 years ago.

Quotes attributable to MFS Chief Officer, Michael Morgan

On International Firefighters Day, also known as St Florian's Day, we remember the service of all firefighters past and present, and we honour those who've died in the line of duty.

It is an honour for MFS and CFS firefighters to pay tribute to Firefighter Herbert Hedger on International Firefighters' Day with a Rededication Memorial Service at his newly refurbished gravesite. Firefighter Hedger left behind a grieving wife and three children, and we're privileged that his relatives are able to join us in remembering him more than a century after his passing.

Despite the passage of time, it is important that we pause to respect the service of those who've dedicated their lives to keeping the community safe.

Quotes attributable to CFS Chief Officer, Brett Loughlin AFSM

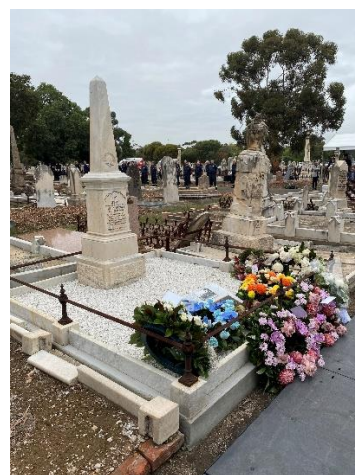
The CFS is proud to stand beside the MFS at the Rededication Memorial Service for SA Fire Brigade Firefighter Herbert Hedger. This memorial is an opportunity to reflect on and honour the ultimate sacrifice made by not only Firefighter Hedger, but the frontline people in South Australia who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Quotes attributable to MFS Commander Peter Reynolds

It has been an honour to help coordinate the refurbishment of Firefighter Herbert Hedger's gravesite, which had fallen into disrepair. Now, Firefighter Herbert's story and sacrifice feature on his grave, meaning he will be remembered at West Terrace Cemetery for generations to come.

I look forward to seeing Firefighter Herbert's ultimate sacrifice honoured on International Firefighters' Day, as a reminder to us all that no matter the passage of time, we must respect and honour those who make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

For media enquiries please telephone the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770



Photos, above: Firefighter Herbert Hedger (L), his descendants with the MFS & CFS Chief Officers at the service, and SAFB Firefighter Hedger's refurbished gravesite.